

HAMPTON VA

NEWS RELEASE

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Start! Peninsula gives business ideas a boost

Nov. 26, 2013 - Three fledgling businesses were chosen over the weekend to receive free incubator space, free internet and phone service, free software and \$2,500 in cash as part of Start! Peninsula, a three-day event in Hampton designed to boost the creation and growth of high-tech businesses on the Peninsula.

The three winners this past weekend were:

- Dr. James Hubbard - Hubbard Innovative Systems
- Steve Hackbarth - Logistify
- Aazia Mickens-Dessaso - HeadCount

Seven other finalists received free incubator space, free internet and phone service and free software. In less than 3 months all 10 finalists will go back before the judges and three business plans will be chosen to receive \$10,000 each in seed money.

Patterned after a program on the West Coast, Start! Peninsula was the brainchild of local business leaders and the Peninsula Technology Incubator in Hampton. Thomas Flake, director of the Incubator, said the idea is to bring together people with ideas and combine them with folks who have resources” – whether expertise or money.

Start! Peninsula began Friday night with about 20 people who asked to pitch their business ideas to six judges. The field was then narrowed to 10 finalists who spent the rest of the weekend honing their ideas with business experts and advisors. Sunday night, they pitched their ideas again and the three finalists were chosen.

“In my capacity with CIT, I travel all over the state,” said one of the judges, Sean Mallon of Virginia’s Center for Innovative Technology in Herndon. “In only eighteen months, Start! Peninsula and the entrepreneurship community in Hampton Roads have put themselves on the map and established a reputation as the place to be in Virginia,” Mallon said.

Another judge, Deborah Wright, a vice president at Thomas Nelson Community College, said: “Hampton Roads abounds with creative applied thinkers. And why not? They are the sons and daughters of people who produced aircraft turbines and aircraft carriers, space stations, automotive powertrains, digital cameras, simulators, gigantic earthmovers, and the integrated

digital technologies that power them all. Start Peninsula provides a place for solutions thinkers and imagineers to synergize with the people who can help guide and fuel the next great enterprise.”

There were 16 sponsors for Start! Peninsula, including the City of Hampton. For a complete list of sponsors, and more information about Start! Peninsula, go to www.startpeninsula.com. To learn more about economic development in Hampton, go to www.hampton.gov/economicdevelopment

The National Institute of Aerospace hosted the program this year. Last year it was at Christopher Newport University in Newport News. Next year it will be in Williamsburg.

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